

WRAC Report April 6, 2006

Overview:

This report summarizes the **April 6, 2006** regular monthly meeting of the WRAC.

Since the March 2, 2006 WRAC Meeting, WRAC Issues Workshops were held as follows:

- March 16: Picayune Strand Pump Stations Preliminary Design, Naples, FL
- March 30: Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir A1 (Phase 1) Preliminary Design, West Palm Beach, FL

The Lake Okeechobee Committee met on March 29 in Ft. Pierce, FL. The Committee report from that meeting has been posted to <http://www.sfwmd.gov>. The Lake Okeechobee Technical Sub-Committee met on March 20 in West Palm Beach.

The April 6, 2006 WRAC Meeting agenda items included:

1. Evolution of Water Management in the Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem
2. Lake Okeechobee "WSE" Regulation Schedule Alternatives
3. Acceler8 Update: C-44 Reservoir Basis of Design Report; Picayune Strand Pump Stations Preliminary Design; and, EAA Reservoir Phase A1 Preliminary Design
4. Decompartmentalization Adaptive Management Plan (CERP) Update
5. Lake Okeechobee Committee Report
6. Alligator Hunting in Stormwater Treatment Areas

Results, April 6, 2006 WRAC Meeting:

- **ACTION ITEM 1:** The WRAC approved a proposal from the WRAC Lake Okeechobee Committee, and recommends to the SFWMD Governing Board that:

"the SFWMD Governing Board direct SFWMD staff to determine a safe discharge level for continuing pulse releases in Zone E from Lake Okeechobee, as measured at the downstream limits (S-79 and S-80), until the water levels in Lake Okeechobee return to Zone D of the existing "WSE" Regulation Schedule. This determination should be done in conjunction with Martin and Lee counties. Monitoring of seagrasses and salinities, should be included in the determination of the safe discharge level."

- **ACTION ITEM 2:** The WRAC approved and recommends that the **SFWMD Governing Board approve a Test Hunt for Alligators on Stormwater Treatment Area 5, to be managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. This recommendation is set**

**forth in SFWMD Governing Board Agenda Item 22, April 12, 2006,
and accompanying Resolution 2006-406.**

- **Recommended future agenda items/issue workshop topics:**
 - Lake Okeechobee “WSE” Regulation Schedule Revisions – Tentatively Selected Plan (May WRAC Meeting).
- **Discussion/Issues:**
- **Evolution of Water Management in the Lake Okeechobee/Everglades Ecosystem:**
 - Historic vs. current lake levels, and amount and distribution of water to the south.
 - When completed, Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park (including raising portion of Tamiami Trail), will help attenuate about 6 inches of Lake Okeechobee outflows.
- **Lake Okeechobee “WSE” Regulation Schedule Alternatives:**
 - Corps will show results of alternatives modeling in graphic form and distribute for review.
 - “Tentatively Selected Plan” to be presented in May.
- **Acceler8 Update**
 - **C-44 Reservoir and STA Basis of Design Report:**
 - Citrus industry could use water from the C-23 Canal. Would need more planning/design and add a pump station.
 - Design capacity of reservoir and STA: Reservoir designed for 30,000 to 40,000 acre feet. STA average depth would be 1.5’. STA not intended to store water but to treat it as it flows through.
 - Purpose of project is to store and treat local basin runoff to benefit the St. Lucie estuary, but not store Lake Okeechobee water.
 - **EAA Reservoir Earthworks, Phase A1:**
 - Original purpose of project (flood protection) vs. current design (storage and hydropattern improvement for Everglades restoration). Project needs to be consistent with CERP (Yellow Book).
 - Yellow Book did not say additional flood protection above year 2000 level of service would be provided. Project designed to be consistent with savings clause and to store water for hydropattern restoration.
 - Status of federal and state permits for the Acceler8 phase of the project. The Project Implementation Report (PIR) is for the entire project. The Section 404, Clean Water Act

(federal) permit is for the Acceler8 portion. The Acceler8 portion will be consistent with the Project Implementation Report.

- Sources of water and capacity of the Acceler8 portion: Reservoir designed to store up to 190,000 acre feet from local basin runoff, Lake Okeechobee, and direct rainfall. Has design changed because of poor quality of lake water? No, modeling assumed lake water quality would remain the same for three years.
- Amount of lake water to be handled by the reservoir: Depends on capacities and effectiveness of the STAs in treating water released from the reservoir.
- Comment: C-44 and EAA Reservoir projects are primarily local basin projects that don't solve the big problem about the need to store wet season flows from Lake Okeechobee. Response: These are CERP projects previously approved and for which there was consensus when passed by Congress in 2000.
- Will there be a reservation of water for the Acceler8 portion of the EAA Reservoir? Response: No, but the water will not be allocated away from the natural system. District cannot reserve what it does not have – don't know the amount that will be available yet.

○ **Picayune Strand Pump Station Preliminary Design:**

- Concerns about size of pump stations – too large, would provide additional flood protection for Northern Golden Gate Estates; too small, would not provide enough sheet flow for restoration.
- Project not intended or designed to store water or have water quality component.
- Concern about recreational use of area. Need to get all parties involved in decision making – Sportsmen and women have not been invited to the table.
- SFWMD recreation and public use policy does not mean and was never intended to provide all access to all lands at all times. Uses must be consistent with project purposes.
- DOI has issues with proposed management plan drafted by FDACS, Div. of Forestry. Will work with SFWMD, Corps and stakeholders on solution. Should be a way to accommodate reasonable uses.

○ **Public Comment:**

- EAA Reservoir, when completed, will be 10 miles across and the fifth largest water body in Florida. Boaters, fishermen and waterfowl hunters will want access. Good to see boat

ramps included in the design. Even with water level fluctuation of 2' to 12', it will be a great place to fish. SFWMD closes access to Kissimmee River and WCAs when dangerous – do the same with the reservoirs.

- **Decomartmentalization Adaptive Management Strategy (DAMP):**
 - Concern that proposed study with 3,000' canal infill will not be enough to learn full effects from larger Decomp. Project.
Response: project designed with full scientific rigor, and it will provide the answers.
 - Project includes options for study recommended by stakeholders.
 - Project intended to provide information for use in deciding on alternatives for implementation of the larger Decomp. Project (CERP).

Future Meetings:

- **April 17: WRAC/A8 Issues Workshop, Site 1 Impoundment Basis of Design Report, 5:30-7:30 p.m., FAU University Center, Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL**
- **April 19: WRAC Issues Workshop, Kissimmee Basin Water Supply Plan, 9:30 a.m., Osceola County Extension Service, Kissimmee, FL**
- **April 20: WRAC Issues Workshop, Lower East Coast Water Supply Plan, 9:30 a.m., SFWMD Miami Field Station, Miami, FL**
- **April 24: WRAC Issues Workshop, Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan, 9:30 a.m., SFWMD Lower West Coast Regional Service Center, Ft. Myers, FL**
- **April 24: WRAC Lake Okeechobee Technical Sub-Committee, 10:00 a.m., SFWMD, Building B-1, West Palm Beach, FL**
- **April 25: WRAC Issues Workshop, 9:30 a.m., USDA/ARS Horticultural Research Lab, Ft. Pierce, FL**
- **April 26, WRAC Lake Okeechobee Committee, 9:00 – 3:00 p.m., LaBelle Civic Auditorium, LaBelle, FL**